

ONE BALDWIN STREET
MONTPELIER, VT 05633-5701

SEN. ANN CUMMINGS, CHAIR
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REP. PETER FAGAN, CLERK
REP. JANET ANCEL
SEN. TIMOTHY ASHE



TEL: (802) 828-2295
FAX: (802) 828-2483
[HTTPS://LJFO.VERMONT.GOV/](https://ljfo.vermont.gov/)

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STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE

April 14, 2020

Governor Phil Scott
109 State Street Pavilion
Montpelier, VT

Dear Governor Scott,

The Joint Fiscal Committee is concerned about the unemployment insurance (UI) system. The Department of Labor is working hard under extraordinary circumstances, and we appreciate their efforts. Nonetheless, we are deeply concerned about the limited abilities of the system and the unacceptable level of service that Vermonters are receiving. Too many unemployed Vermonters are struggling to get answers to their questions and file a UI claim. While the Vermont health care system seems to have prepared for a medical surge that will hopefully be avoided, the Department of Labor's UI system does not appear to be capable of handling the unemployment surge that is underway.

We ask you to:

1. Assess the situation. As a first step, we suggest you create a weekly dashboard that shows customer service data (e.g., volume of calls, amount of time spent on hold, number of calls not answered, number of claims received online, number of new claims not processed) as well as claims processed and ongoing claims. The assessment should also include a projection of the number of anticipated applications and possible risks to the system.
2. Develop a plan of corrective actions. Those corrective actions must include contingency plans in case your new software cannot handle the load.
3. Provide recommendations for needed legislative action. We welcome recommendations on the resources and authority that are needed for the Department of Labor and other State organizations to address pressing needs for Vermonters. It is imperative that this unacceptable situation be remedied, and we stand ready to take action to facilitate this.

This is a time of crisis for many Vermonters, and we ask you to provide better service to those in need.

Sincerely,

Senator Ann Cummings (tluj)

Senator Ann Cummings
Chair, Joint Fiscal Committee

CC: Susanne Young, Secretary, Agency of Administration
Brad Ferland, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Administration
Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance & Management
Michael Harrington, Acting Commissioner, Department of Labor
Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee